

**To:** Ostrander, David[Ostrander.David@epa.gov]  
**From:** Way, Steven  
**Sent:** Thur 11/5/2015 8:38:51 PM  
**Subject:** FW: Follow Up Question - input needed

Steven Way

Federal On-Scene Coordinator

Emergency Response Unit

US EPA - Region 8

1595 Wynkoop Street

Denver, CO 80202

Office: 303-312-6723

**From:** Way, Steven  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 05, 2015 1:32 PM  
**To:** Griswold, Hays  
**Subject:** RE: Follow Up Question - input needed

Hays,

Thanks for letting me look at it. I'll let you send it on to David Ostrander when you're ready.

I would simply add that we had standard procedures for an emergency in place in our Emergency Action plan that included securing the scene to keep the public away and notifications were initiated in a timely manner. This is consistent with the NCP.

Thanks,

Steve

Steven Way

Federal On-Scene Coordinator

Emergency Response Unit

US EPA - Region 8

1595 Wynkoop Street

Denver, CO 80202

Office: 303-312-6723

**From:** Griswold, Hays

**Sent:** Thursday, November 05, 2015 11:55 AM

**To:** Way, Steven

**Cc:** Matt Francis ([m.francis@erllc.com](mailto:m.francis@erllc.com)); [Allen.Sorenson@state.co.us](mailto:Allen.Sorenson@state.co.us)

**Subject:** Re: Follow Up Question - input needed

My response would be that - to be clear and repeat myself - there was no intention of opening the adit to access the mine pool. The activities were simply an investigation of the nature of the blockage and surrounding conditions.

In that regard the precautions we were taking was primarily directed at staying as far away from the blockage as possible and still be able to examine the entirety of the situation. This was in anticipation of a gathering of fellow experts to be held August 14th. The group could then see the exposed blockage and surrounding conditions and begin to develop a plan to access the mine pool.

Staying clear of the blockage was the primary precaution. Another precaution was to be very vigilant and proceed very slowly as we excavated the rubble, debris, and unconsolidated soils that covered the actual blockage. Then when we exposed the blockage we were very careful to protect it from our activities. When the blockage was exposed that was the end of our excavations directed toward the adit portal.

We had decided at that point to clean off the unconsolidated soil at what we projected to be well above the portal for two reasons. First the material continued to fall down and cover up the exposed blockage. Second to expose the hard bedrock above the portal to better assess its characteristics for planning purposes. So as another precaution we built a ramp four or five feet high in front of the blockage but not up against it so that the excavator could drive up on it to reach the higher material. The ramp served other precautionary measures as well. First it better protected the blockage from our activities. Second, it served as a secondary surge protection structure (the actual blockage being the first) in the event there was a release of water. The bottom five feet of material that was originally there from the 90's plus our four to five feet of ramp did in fact act as surge protection at the time of release. Because all of that material was in place the release was very slow to develop - not a sudden burst open and onrush of water - all personnel and equipment were already out of harms way, but also had plenty of time to get situated in safe locations.

In addition with good radio communications and personnel situated down below the site we were able to direct them to take actions to protect the public by blocking roads etc. to danger areas but also to make appropriate notifications.

Hays

Sent from my iPad

On Nov 5, 2015, at 9:41 AM, Way, Steven <[way.steven@epa.gov](mailto:way.steven@epa.gov)> wrote:

Gentlemen,

Let's discuss what if any additional information to provide to respond to the following that was sent to me from David Olander:

*Our response says, "The Site Health and Safety Plan at the Gold King Mine included emergency procedures. All indications at the site were that there was limited water backed up inside the mine and precautions were taken to avoid an uncontrolled release."*

**OMB wants us to detail what precautions were taken.**

The question to us: Is there additional information we can provide?

Thanks.

Steven Way

Federal On-Scene Coordinator

Emergency Response Unit

US EPA - Region 8

1595 Wynkoop Street

Denver, CO 80202

Office: 303-312-6723